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FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3662
INFO RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA PRIORITY 1609
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY 0809
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY 1520
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY 0169
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY 0728
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0194
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SUBJECT: NEWSPAPER DIRECTOR ARRESTED, ARRAIGNED ON
DIVISIONISM/SECTARIANISM CHARGES

11. (SBU) Summary. On Friday, January 19, Agnes Nkusi-Uwimana, director of the Kinyarwanda-language newspaper, "Umurabyo" was arraigned on charges of divisionism and sectarianism stemming from recent articles in the paper that appeared to minimize the genocide or advance the notion of a double genocide. Nkusi-Uwimana also faces one unrelated charge of fraud for writing a bad check. Nkusi-Uwimana's arrest on January 11 followed both public sanction by her fellow journalists and a recommendation by Rwanda's High Council of the Press (HCP) that her paper be suspended. Nkusi-Uwimana's arrest, coming at a time when her fellow independent journalists have levied increasingly harsh criticisms of the lack of political space in Rwanda without government sanction, indicates that the GOR remains particularly sensitive to the issues of ethnic divisionism and sectarianism, and genocide ideology. End Summary.

12. (U) In issue 10 (December 8-22) of "Umurabyo," Nkusi-Uwimana published an article under the headline "Those Who Killed Tutsi in Trouble; Those Who Killed Hutu in Total Freedom," and with the subtitle "It will be difficult for Rwandans to differentiate a 'Hutu Interahamwe' and a 'Tutsi Interahamwe.'" The article, which was widely interpreted locally to be equating killings by RPF soldiers with the killings that took place during the genocide, caused an immediate stir among local journalists and led them to call the author, Agnes Nkusi-Uwimana, to explain herself before a gathering of her peers on December 12. The unprecedented meeting was organized by an ad-hoc committee of five journalists led by Charles Kabonero, director of Rwanda Independent Media Group (and editor of both "Rwanda Newsline" and "Umuseso") and a leading government critic. Also on the committee was a second vocal government critic, Jean Bosco Gasasira, editor of "Umuvugizi" newspaper. The committee criticized Nkusi-Uwimana for her lack of professionalism, for tarnishing the reputation of journalists in Rwanda, and for printing a revisionist article. The group called on her to issue an apology and corrections in the paper's next issue. Nkusi-Uwimana agreed to do so.

13. (U) The action taken by the journalists appears to have been the outgrowth of a seminar on media self-regulation organized by the Association of Rwandan Journalists in conjunction with the PANOS Institute. The journalists intended through their prompt action to demonstrate that they can effectively regulate themselves and to forestall further sanction by the HCP or GOR authorities. The HCP concluded, however, that the article was so offensive that further punishment was warranted. On December 15, the HCP accused

Nkusi-Uwimana of discrimination and defamation and forwarded to the Information Minister its recommendation that the paper be suspended for three months. Though some journalists reacted to the HCP's recommendation with disappointment (not because they did not find the article offensive, but because the HCP did not respect their attempt to police themselves), others believed that "Umurabyo" should be suspended. The HCP twice before has recommended that papers be suspended; in both instances, the Information Minister declined to do so. In this instance the Information Minister has yet to render a decision.

¶4. (U) Instead of writing the corrections and apology that she had agreed to, Nkusi-Uwimana wrote in issue 11 (published on January 1, 2007) an open letter to all newspaper directors operating in Rwanda, urging them not to fear "those who do not like the truth, and do not be scared by the RPF's corrupted and criminal officials." She went on to reiterate her claim that those who killed Hutus during the genocide remain free, and castigated high-profile GOR and RPA officials, categorizing them by Hutu and Tutsi origin, and calling them dogs and prostitutes. The police arrested Nkusi-Uwimana on January 11 at the request of the Prosecutor General's office. Following her arraignment, Nkusi-Uwimana was transferred to Kigali's Central Prison where she will remain until her trial begins (per Rwandan law, she can be held up to thirty days between arraignment and the start of her trial).

¶5. (SBU) Comment. "Umurabyo" is a recently established, twice-monthly newspaper with low circulation. Nkusi-Uwimana has little editorial experience, having worked in marketing for a rival news publication. While this is the first time

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the HCP has recommended that "Umurabyo" be suspended, it is not the first time it has come in for criticism from the body. According to Patrice Mulama, executive secretary of the HCP, Nkusi-Uwimana previously published a wholly fabricated interview with President Kagame. Nkusi-Uwimana's current troubles have taken place in the context of a general loosening of restrictions on the press in Rwanda. "Focus," "Umuseso," and "Newsline" all opened 2007 with strongly worded criticisms of the lack of political space in Rwanda and, in the case of sister papers "Newsline" and "Umuseso", direct criticism of Kagame for stifling dissent and exhibiting dictatorial tendencies. These articles (and similar comments on Rwandan radio) have not provoked any criticism from the HCP or the GOR. The contrasting responses suggest that the GOR will continue to respond with a firm hand to what it regards as ethnic divisionism or genocide ideology while loosening its grip on other forms of criticism.

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